

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

Tapetes de Lana Weaving Center

New Mexico Manufacturing Extension Partnership

Tapetes de Lana Weaving Center Cleans Up to Improve Productivity

Client Profile:

Tapetes de Lana Weaving Center was incorporated in 1998 as a non-profit welfare-to-work program for the unemployed. In 2000, Tapetes de Lana changed its focus, and now helps people that are low-income or have a hard time finding work. Employees can either work in the showroom or they can work out of their homes, so they can watch their children. Tapetes employs 20 weavers and six management staff.

Tapetes de Lana manufactures products woven from natural wool yarns. The company is headquartered in Las Vegas, New Mexico, and sells its products at a local shop (owned by the company), the Santa Fe Weaving Gallery, and on the internet.

Situation:

Tapetes de Lana Weaving Center (Tapetes)'s dyed wool yarn storage area was a disaster. With no system in place to track and sort inventory, yarn supplies were frequently depleted and new yarns weren't ordered on time. Yarn was not available for key orders, and orders were not filled on time. Not only was it difficult for employees to find the correct yarns in the storage room, they also spent innumerable hours trying to find tools and loom parts. When customers began to complain, the company knew it had to act. Tapetes contacted the New Mexico Manufacturing Extension Partnership (NM MEP), a NIST MEP network affiliate, for assistance.

Solution:

NM MEP and Tapetes embarked on a process of discovery to find high-impact ways to improve the situation. Together they decided that developing a system to control and track the dyed wool inventory would be most beneficial. With the help of NM MEP, the Tapetes staff performed a 5S (workplace organization) kaizen event. 5S stands for sort, set in order, shine, standardize, and sustain. The staff organized the yarn into categories and placed the yarn into labeled bins. All the yarn was tagged with an "address" and a "return address" to ensure it would stay sorted and in the correct bins after use. Then the team created a simple visual reordering system. All the tools and loom parts were organized so they could be found quickly and easily. Also, each weaver now has a box in which to keep inventory for current projects. The weavers' boxes help keep the showroom clean and organized.

Finally, the team assigned all employees a designated location to place their finished products for grading and evaluation. Tapetes' management staff applied the same workplace organizational principles to the yarn inventory at its Mora facility. As a result, productivity has improved, deliveries are on time, and customers are satisfied.

Results:

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- * Established an inventory management system.
- * Improved productivity by 10 percent.
- * Improved on-time delivery from 70 percent to 90 percent.
- * Increased customer satisfaction.

Testimonial:

"A three-day workshop with the New Mexico Manufacturing Extension Partnership gave us a new way to organize our raw materials and tools for weaving. NM MEP's training demonstrated methods for efficiently keeping track of our materials and has saved us vast amounts of time in the process. We are very grateful for [this] help."

Carla Gomez, Executive Director